



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

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Benjamin Barnes
Secretary
Office of Policy and Management

Testimony Opposing House Bill 6218

An Act Establishing a Task Force on Safety Net Services

Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present you with written testimony on House Bill 6218, "An Act Establishing a Task Force on Safety Net Services."

If enacted, this legislation would create a nine member Task Force charged with developing budgetary, policy and statutory changes to improve our state's safety net services.

The bill designates the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), the Department of Social Services, the Department of Labor and appointments from legislative leadership to serve on the Task Force. It also requires that OPM serve as the administrative staff for the Task Force.

My office and the Administration understand the great importance of all safety net services, especially as the state and country face such trying economic times. Given these financial conditions, we also believe that it is critical to find innovative and creative avenues to deliver these services in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. In fact, as the Governor's executive budget and planning agency, OPM, in conjunction with other agencies, is currently performing the very tasks this new proposed Task Force would be charged to complete. In these times of limited resources, we don't believe a Task Force that duplicates efforts already being undertaken is prudent or necessary. We, therefore, cannot support this bill.

It should also be noted that OPM, given all the work it is already doing in these areas, does not have the resources available to also then staff the proposed new Task Force.

While House Bill 6218 notes that OPM shall provide administrative staff for the Task Force, we believe, given our experience in this area, that the staff work that will be necessary entails policy analysis, research and report writing, duties far beyond those provided by administrative staff. In order to complete the work of the Task Force, OPM would require the addition of a full-time planner with the requisite knowledge level to perform the required tasks. We estimate such a high level planner would cost approximately \$110,000 in salary and fringe benefits.

OPM, along with other agencies, currently examines safety net services and understands the essential value of such services. We believe that creating a Task Force that duplicates the important work OPM and other agencies are currently undertaking is a poor investment of time and resources given the fiscal challenges we all are currently facing.

Thank you for your consideration and for addressing this important issue.